



Labor and Workforce Development

Home > \$250,000 in Grants for Inmate Re-Entry Programming

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Baker-Polito Administration Awards \$250,000 in Workforce Development Grants for Inmate Re-Entry Programming

Program piloted by community-based organizations in Springfield, Holyoke and Lowell

Lowell, MA – The Baker-Polito Administration today awarded \$250,000 in **Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program** grants to pilot employment programming for incarcerated populations. These re-entry grants will provide funding to community based organizations in Springfield, Holyoke and Worcester for pre and post prison release services including; job training for former prisoners in order to facilitate job placement, support services and programs for court-involved youths, and wage subsidies to facilitate private sector employment and professional development.

"Leveraging community-based organizations' ability to engage individuals and employers locally can improve workforce readiness for those re-entering society and their communities," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "This program's focus on evidence-based outcomes will help us tailor strategies to best prepare those who have served their time to find employment and support themselves and their families."

The **Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program** is a product of the Baker-Polito Administration's Task Force on Economic Opportunity for Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment, chaired by the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, Ronald L. Walker, II. The Task Force found that individuals within prison populations experienced complex needs that require intensive interventions for them to be successful in securing and maintaining employment. Access to adequate re-entry services was identified as a barrier to employment that disproportionately impacts the target populations and leads to greater recidivism.

"Facilitating one-on-one relationships between case workers and inmates preparing to re-enter the workforce has the opportunity and potential to further reduce recidivism, while providing high-demand skills that allow individuals to compete for the jobs employers are working to fill," **said Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito**.

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) contracted with Commonwealth Corporation to administer funding to support re-entry programming. The initial pilot grants for this programing have gone to ROCA in Springfield, the River Valley Counseling Center in Holyoke, and UTEC in Lowell. A portion of the grant funding is also going to CareerPoint, which partners with the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, and will offer technical assistance to the project in order to expand successful models to other organizations.

Speaking at UTEC, where the announcement event was held, **Secretary Walker** noted, "The focus on wrap around services is particularly important for creating job pathways for those being released from prison. By providing post-release case management, access to transportation services, housing assistance, child care, and connections with career services, this program helps improve the likelihood that participants will get and keep a job."

UTEC's president, Gregg Croteau, spoke about the unique nature of the program in his remarks, explaining that, "UTEC is honored to receive this funding and we appreciate the Secretary's continued leadership on providing employment for young adults returning from both the Middlesex and Essex County Sheriffs Offices. This funding will help UTEC better connect young adults to employment success through our social enterprises and other services."

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